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Stories in MEDNEWS use these abbreviations after a Navy medical professional's name to show affiliation: MC - Medical Corps (physician); DC - Dental Corps; NC - Nurse Corps; MSC - Medical Service Corps (clinicians, researchers and administrative managers). Hospital Corpsmen (HM) and Dental Technician (DT) designators are placed in front of their names.

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Headline: NEPMU-5 MMART deploys to Antigua

By Lt. Al Lumanog, Public Affairs Officer, NEPMU-5

NORFOLK, Va. - Navy Environmental & Preventive Medicine Unit No. Five (NEPMU-5) deployed a Mobile Medical Augmentation Readiness Team (MMART) to Antigua July 5-29 in support of the United States Southern Command New Horizons 2000 Exercises.

The nine-person team was assigned to Joint Task Force Antigua at Camp Blizzard, the Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force's military base. The team supported the JTF and worked with the Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Health to provide training and other support for their public health programs.

"This deployment was mutually beneficial to the JTF, the Antiguan government, and our MMART team. Besides giving our team field experience, the deployment benefited both through the wide variety of deployable preventive medicine expertise and support that we provided," said Lt. Cmdr. Michael Medina, MSC,

the team's medical planner.

Members of the team were paired off with local public health officials to help identify and mitigate public health risks in local business and government facilities. They surveyed suspected mosquito breeding grounds, assisted in sanitation inspections in hotels and restaurants, conducted indoor air quality and noise studies in several government facilities, and used rapid laboratory diagnostic procedures to screen human, animal and environmental samples for infectious disease agents. The team also worked with the JTF to prevent illnesses often found in deployed forces.

"At first, the SeaBees and the Marines in the camp were curious about who we were and what we did," said MMART member HM1 Sonji Bucannon. "But when they saw us checking the rats we trapped from the camp for potential disease-carrying fleas, collecting mosquitoes, and going to their work sites to monitor noise, dust and welding fumes, they got a pretty good idea what our team does and what our mission is. They knew we were there to support them."

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Headline: NOSTRA completes phase one of ergonomic improvements

YORTOWN, Va. - The Naval Ophthalmic Support and Training Activity (NOSTRA) recently completed the first phase of a comprehensive \$600,000 ergonomic modification of all production and office spaces. Ergonomics is the science of fitting the job to the worker. The Naval Facilities Engineering Command provided technical assistance and hazard abatement funding to correct the many ergonomic hazards encountered while producing approximately 423,727 pairs of prescription eyewear annually. The project was developed to identify and prevent employee risk of cumulative trauma disorders, improve the work environment, and increase productivity.

Ergonomics is on the forefront of optical laboratory workplace design. The project involved extensive laboratory data automation, adjustable workstations, mechanical stock retrieval system and ergonomic seating. The NOSTRA staff is already noticing benefits from the ergonomic upgrades. They now enjoy adjustable workstations that reduce fatigue from working in awkward positions. The new eyewear prescription data transfer interface has eliminated more than 6 million data entry keystrokes and associated worker fatigue.

The Command Ergo Team is working on additional ergonomics improvements.

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Headline: Great Lakes commands awarded Meritorious Unit Commendation

By Lt. Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, MSC, Naval Hospital PAO

GREAT LAKES, Ill. - If you were assigned to Naval Hospital Great Lakes from November 1, 1998, to March 1, 2000, you may be entitled to receive the Meritorious Unit Commendation.

Earlier this month Great Lakes commands received the award for the "conduct of recruits and student technical training for

the Department of Defense." The award commended the personnel of Naval Training, Center Great Lakes, Ill., for consistently displaying exemplary resourcefulness, teamwork and determination while achieving unprecedented success in increasing training capability and incorporating sweeping change to the training process.

The commendation further stated that the extraordinary increase in demand for new Sailors for the Navy's operational forces resulted in a 20 percent increase in recruit summer surge accessions for Fiscal Year 1999. In order to transform these civilians into successful Sailors, without compromising Navy standards, the entire staff transcended conventional paradigms for inter-command cooperation and multi-disciplinary program innovation.

"This honor represents the radical changes this base has undergone in two years and its critical position as the Navy's only Recruit Training Center," said Capt. Elaine Holmes, MC, commanding officer Naval Hospital Great Lakes.

Holmes also remarked that this award is not only for the active duty staff of Naval Hospital Great Lakes but for those active and reserve units that provide support during the Recruit Summer Surge for the period mentioned.

If you served at Naval Hospital Great Lakes contact the Public Affairs Office at (847) 688-2711 DSN 792. Reserve personnel on ADSW (Active Duty for Special Work) or AT (Annual Training) during timeframe are also entitled. Reservists should contact Reserve Liaison Office at (847) 688-2723/2726/6699.

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Headline: NMCP ratified first and finest in-patient care
By Naval Medical Center Portsmouth Public Affairs Office

PORTSMOUTH, Va. - NAVAL Medical Center Portsmouth constantly impresses many military beneficiaries with its facilities and outstanding patient care, but last month it also made an impact on some hard-to-impress surveyors.

A team from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) visited NMCP in July to evaluate the work and patient care practices of the hospital. As part of the survey, every department and clinic was scrutinized from sharp containers to medical records, and everything in-between. Afterward the hospital was awarded a preliminary score of 95.

NMCP's score is even more significant after the changes implemented for the year 2000 survey made the overall standards tougher. Currently, the average score for healthcare facilities across the nation is in the 80's.

Vikki Garner, Head of Quality Management said the toughest part of preparing for the survey was making sure the staff was aware and understood what the Joint Commission was looking for.

"Considering the move to Charette 15 months ago, the staff faced a challenge with having to get used to a new building, new equipment and new guidelines, but everyone was determined to be the best," Garner said.

"The Joint Commission team was totally overwhelmed by our

unwavering commitment to quality health care, wonderful staff, and a beautiful facility," said Rear Adm. Marion Balsam.

The entire staff at NMCP was thrilled at the score, but they weren't surprised. "I knew we'd score high because we already provide great services for our patients. We knew the surveyors would see our hard work," said HMI Thomas Kooser, Cardiology's leading Petty Officer.

JCAHO's accreditation is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality. It verifies that an organization meets certain performance standards. To earn and maintain accreditation, an organization must undergo an on-site survey by JCAHO at least every three years.

Along with the JCAHO surveyors, the Medical Inspector General team also conducted their review of the hospital. The admiral was extremely complimentary to the NMCP's Board of Director's.

"You have already achieved your vision of being the "First and Finest" medical treatment facility," Balsam said.

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Headline: Anthrax question and answer

Question: What will happen if personnel are exposed to anthrax before they gain immunity through vaccination?

Answer: Personnel will be treated with antibiotics if there is a known exposure to anthrax before gaining immunity through vaccination. Antibiotics are effective in treating animals, including primates, exposed to inhalation anthrax, but only if started before symptoms develop. This would usually mean starting antibiotics in the first 24 hours after exposure. Unfortunately, service members may not know they have been exposed until symptoms develop; by then, the infection is nearly always fatal within a few days, whether antibiotics are given or not. The best protection to counter inhalation anthrax is the use of the anthrax vaccine combined with the appropriate Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP), including protective clothing and detection equipment.

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Headline: TRICARE question and answer

Question: I'm on active duty and stationed away from a military installation. What do I do for medical care, and do I have to pay?

Answer: Currently, as an active duty member, you are covered for your health care needs through supplemental care funds; under no circumstance will you be required to pay for any health care you may need. While not available currently, policy changes are being worked to provide TRICARE Prime from civilian PCM in the local area for Geographically Separated Units (GSU).

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Headline: Healthwatch: Off the Couch, spud!

From the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

If the most exercise you get comes from changing TV channels with the remote, you may be jeopardizing your health.

By turning the television off, your risks of becoming or staying overweight are reduced by as much as 50 percent. Not to mention, turning off the television could improve your concentration, your communication with your family and friends, and your quality of life.

Two recent studies of Americans viewing habits showed that the chances for unhealthy obesity more than doubles when TV viewing reaches three to four hours a day.

Unfortunately, many people spend almost as much time watching television as they spend working for a living. And for many children, TV viewing is their primary daily activity, second only to sleeping!

You don't have to throw out your television to reduce its influence over your life. To help get that TV monkey off your back, try these tips to limit the amount of time you spend in front of the boob tube:

- Preselect programs and schedule viewing time for only the programs you really want to watch. Stick to that schedule!
- Stop channel surfing. Turn on the set only for the preselected programs and then turn it off when the show is over.
- When the TV is off, get out of the house. Go for a walk or visit friends or neighbors.
- If you can't leave the house, leave the room with the television. Read something, write a letter, resume an old hobby or find a new one.

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